

PO Box 19
Churchill
3842



Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – May 2015

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaeon.net>
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Hello everyone and welcome to this month's newsletter. Included this month is an update on the new bridge, April activity report and an article from Matt about the results from the reconyx cameras.

More Green Walks are scheduled for the next few months. Each walk will be a 60 minute guided walks rated easy to moderate. Meeting time is 10.00 with the walks departing at 10.10 am. The next Green Walks planned in Morwell National Park are:

Tuesday 5th May

Foster's Gully Walk

Meet at Kerry Road picnic

Tuesday 23rd June

Billys Creek Weir

Meet at the Baniff's Road car park

Registration is essential at www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/walking/Pages/events-and-park-walks.aspx or call the Heart Foundation's Health Information Service on 1300 362 787

Local enquiries, contact Bonnie, Local Coordinator Heart Foundation Walking 1800 242 696

The great news over the last month is that the new bridge across Billy's Creek near the Baniff's Road entrance has been completed. The bridge was constructed from an old bridge span which was mounted on new footings. The contractor constructed new footings on each side of the creek and attached the bridge span across it. A great job has been done with it looking like it has been there for years.



Friends of Morwell National Park Inc: PO Box 19, Churchill, 3842, <http://morwellnp.pangaeon.net>.

President: Ken Harris

Vice-President: Matt Campbell

Secretary: Beryl Nelson

Treasurer: John Barker

Publicity: Brenda Chetham

Public Officer: Beryl Nelson

Newsletter Editor: Darren Hodgson, hodgson.darren.d@edumail.vic.gov.au

Other members: Mary Austin, Margaret Barker, Mike and Cathy Beamish, Eulalie Brewster, Kerry Campbell, Peter and Wendy McDonald, Joan Sikkema, Neil Slater, Wendy Steenbergen, Australian Plant Society (Latrobe Valley).

The contractor also completed work on a new culvert near the Butt Butt track and secured the creek bank where it was under washing the track. A section of track was at risk of falling into the creek since the direction of the creek had changed over time and was eating into the area under the track. The creek has been redirected and track secured by a wall of rock.



John's Jottings

This month I am providing ongoing snippets lifted from the Morwell National Park Management Plan (1998) which I'm sure will make interesting reading for you too.

Management Plan continued from last month.....

"2.2 Management directions

Major management directions for the Park are outlined below.

Resource conservation

- Significant natural features will be given special protection.
- Biological surveys to identify significant fauna will be conducted.
- Management prescriptions will be developed for areas of significant botanical interest.

Park protection

- Co-operative management with adjoining landholders to control pest plants and animals will be encouraged.
- The revegetation program for degraded areas will be continued.
- A Fire Management Plan will be developed for the Park, with particular emphasis on fire prevention, suppression and ecological burning.

The Park visit

- Billy's Creek Valley will be developed and promoted for day visitor use.
- Bushwalking opportunities will be improved and extended.
- High quality information on the Park's natural values will be available.
- Visitor enjoyment of the Park will be enhanced by improved interpretation of key features - for example, native vegetation and historical features.

Community awareness and involvement

- Co-operation with local landholders, community groups and local Government will be fostered to encourage the application of the Good Neighbour Policy to management issues on or near the boundary of the Park."

To be continued next month.....



Reconyx Cameras (by Matt Campbell)

At the AGM in August, 2014, I was asked if I'd like to collect the Reconyx motion sensing cameras from Ken's house and start using them around the Park. I was more than happy to do so, having already been using a less expensive version on our own property for several years.

The models of the cameras are Reconyx branded HC550 Hyperfire White Flash and a HC600 Hyperfire HD Covert IR. The HC550, as the name suggests, has built in LED flash and will take colour shots during both the night and day while the 600 uses infrared so at night it only gives black and white shots. However, the shots are slightly crisper than those supplied by the 550.

When the group purchased the cameras a few accessories were also bought. These included 'python locks' for securing the cameras to trees (rather than using the simple 'bungee' that comes with them), several 4gb SD memory cards and 48 rechargeable batteries and charger (more on the cards and batteries later).

As my camera is much simpler to use, I decided to trial the Reconyx cameras on our place to get used to how they work, where best to place them and what settings I should change. This meant I could go back each few days to check on them. At this stage I also manufactured some bait holders. This was new to me as with my own camera I simply set it in likely looking places but with more 'official' camera trapping surveys, baits are usually used. The bait I make consists of oats, peanut butter, honey and a splash of vanilla essence. This is rolled into a ball about the size of a golf ball and placed in the holder.

After the initial trial period I finally got around to placing the cameras in the Park on the 14th September 2014. The White Flash was set up in Fosters Gully (Section D) while the Infrared went over to West Boundary (Section B). It's a fine balance between finding spots where there's suitable habitat yet open enough for the cameras. Some light pruning and clearing is required otherwise you end up filling the memory cards with shots of leaves and grasses blowing in the wind. The bait holder is then fixed to the ground using some pegs I'd fashioned from some table ware (long story) and is located about 2 metres in front of a suitable tree. The camera then gets strapped to the tree and some trial shots are taken. This involves setting the camera, waiting for it to take shots and then switching it off, placing the memory card into my SLR (the camera has no view function), checking the shots and then deciding if it's ok where it is or some further adjustment is required. Once all is good the python cable is locked and you walk away.

The standard time for such surveys is around 3 weeks. When the cameras were purchased, enough memory cards and batteries were also bought to enable them to simply be swapped out and the cameras left out full time. However, due to the amount of time it takes to carry them out to suitable locations, set them up and then collect them, I've been placing them out for 3 weeks then bringing the whole lot home for a week before setting them up in new locations. I also like to clean out the bait holders as these can become quite dirty over time, especially if the bait has gone mouldy or ants have found them.



Bobuck (Stringybark F)



Bush rat (Muttonwood D)



Lyrebird pair (Stringybark H)

So far I've only managed two new species not previously recorded in the Park. They are the native Bush Rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) and the introduced Hare (*Lepus capensis*) however several species have shown up in places not previously recorded and it appears that some, such as the Bobuck (*Trichosurus cunninghami*) are actually a lot more common than previously thought. In fact Bobucks seem to be showing up everywhere! There's still several species I'd love to find on the cameras and hopefully in time some of them will show up.

So far I've only had the cameras around Fosters Gully and the Northern end of Stringybark and West Boundary with a single location on Muttonwood but I hope to soon start setting them further afield including the Billys Creek side of the Park.



Wombat (Stringybark F)



Koala (Fosters Gully K)

Below is a list of what I've found so far. An asterisk indicates a new location for the species while a double asterisk is a new species for the Park. For the purposes of this article, only common names have been used.

Fosters Gully D (2 sessions)	Swamp Wallaby, Bobuck, Lyrebird, Wombat, Echidna, White-browed Scrubwren
Fosters Gully K	Bobuck*, Lyrebird, Koala, Wombat, Bassian Thrush
Fosters Gully L	Swamp Wallaby*, Koala
Muttonwood D	Bush Rat**, Swamp Wallaby, White-browed Scrubwren, Eastern Whipbird, Agile Antechinus, Wombat, Bobuck*, Koala
Stringybark F	Wombat, Bobuck*, Swamp Wallaby, Bassian Thrush*, Hare**, Koala, Bush Rat*, Fox*
Stringybark G	Wombat, Echidna*, Lyrebird*, Bobuck*, Swamp Wallaby
Stringybark H	Swamp Wallaby*, Wombat*, Lyrebird*, White-browed Scrubwren
Stringybark R	Swamp Wallaby, Wombat*, Fox*, Bobuck*
Stringybark S	Swamp Wallaby*, Wombat*, Echidna*
West Boundary A	Swamp Wallaby*, Wombat, Bush rat*, Lyrebird
West Boundary B	Echidna*, Wombat*, Bobuck*

April Activity Report

Activity 1

At this activity we had Beryl, John, Matt, Ken, Darren, Japanese exchange student Yuto, Chinese exchange student Jeffrey and Craig. This activity was to mount six nesting boxes constructed by the Morwell Men's Shed. The weather did not look good with much rain overnight and more earlier that morning.

The group transferred to the Baniff's Road entrance and there numbered the new boxes. Firstly we travelled to the new bridge and nearby construction works. This new bridge will make it easier for the people from the Baniff's Road area to access the park. This bridge will remove the need to use Pipeline Track which is very susceptible to land slips. The track signage will need to change with one sign needing to be moved and another removed.

The new nesting boxes were placed along the Baniff's Road track. This area was replanted from farmland so these boxes will provide more animal living sites. Throughout the morning we observed many mobs of kangaroos and at the end of the activity spotted a pair of wedge tail eagles. The weather panned out well with only a brief shower at the end of the activity.



Activity 2

For the second activity the group got together for a BBQ and spotlight walk. For this activity we had Wendy, Matt, Mike, Cathy, Tamara, Ken, Margaret, John, David, Rose, David, Yuto, Jeffrey and Darren. It was our largest turn out. John and Margaret had started earlier upon the BBQ, while Ken, Matt, Tamara, David and David set up the spotlights and sheets for the moth survey.

The evening got dark very quickly, so the BBQ was eaten by spotlight. After dinner the group travelled to mothing spotlight to see whether any moths had come in. Only a few moths had come in during this cool evening. Many from the group then went for a spotlight walk around Foster's Gully. Many different animals were heard and seen with possum, koalas, wallabies and owls seen or heard. The area is very different at night and the whole environment is different. The park at night is very different than the daytime.

The group returned to the mothing spotlight and found that it was not a great night for moths. Over the years Ken has found over 700 different moths (of which 552 have been identified) within Morwell National Park.

May Activity
Sunday 17th May

The group will meet at 10.00am in the Junction Road car park. The group will work on weed removal along Billy Weir track and from Billy's Creek. We will be working in and beside the creek, so gumboots or waders may be useful.

You will need to bring your lunch along with clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day.

